



Walking the line between science and advocacy

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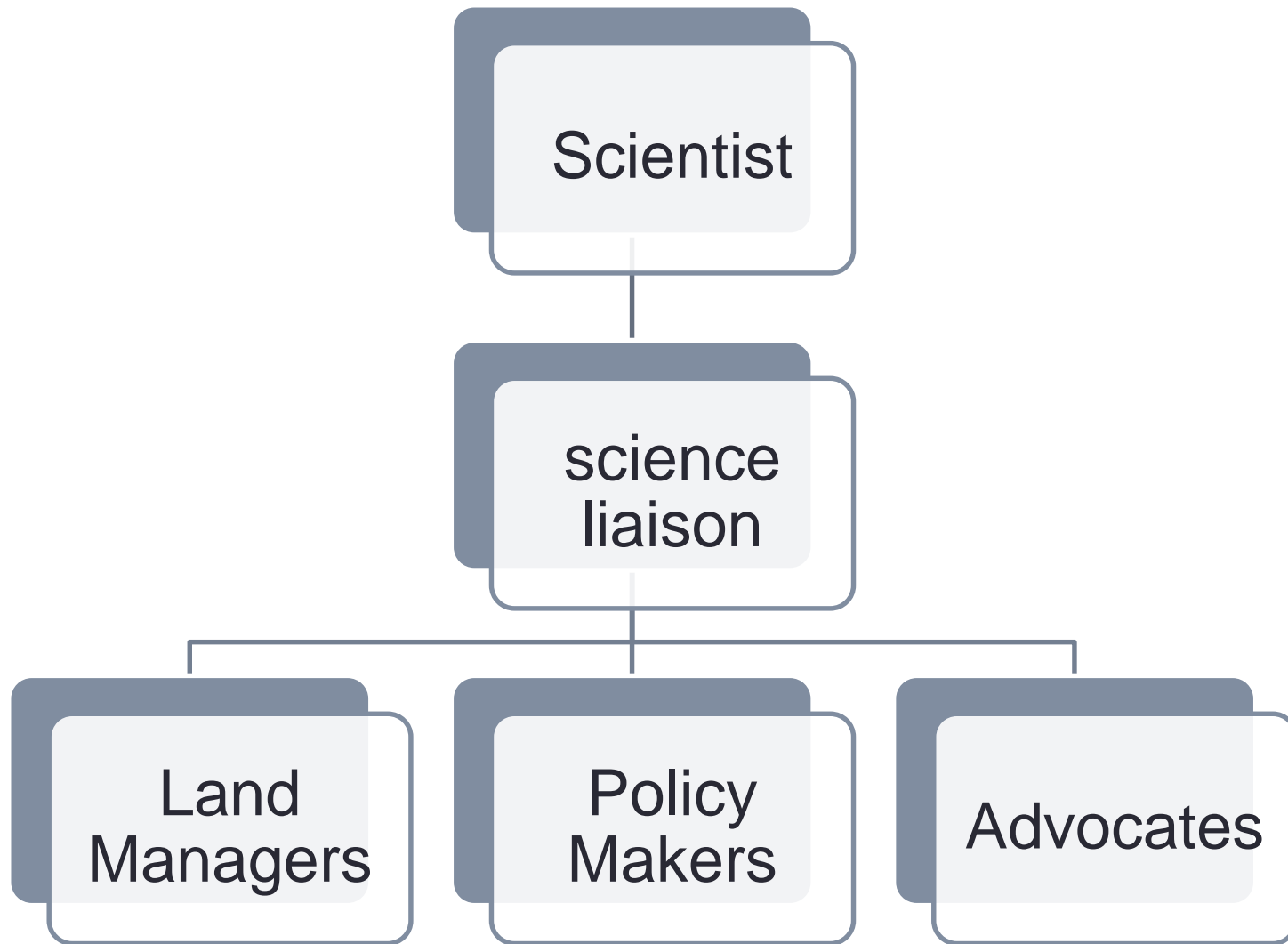
- Research Economist
- 32 years with USFS
- Work mostly on economics of “things that burn” (wildfire and biomass energy)
- Likes sailing, camping, hiking and cats

Outline

Communicating Inside the Government

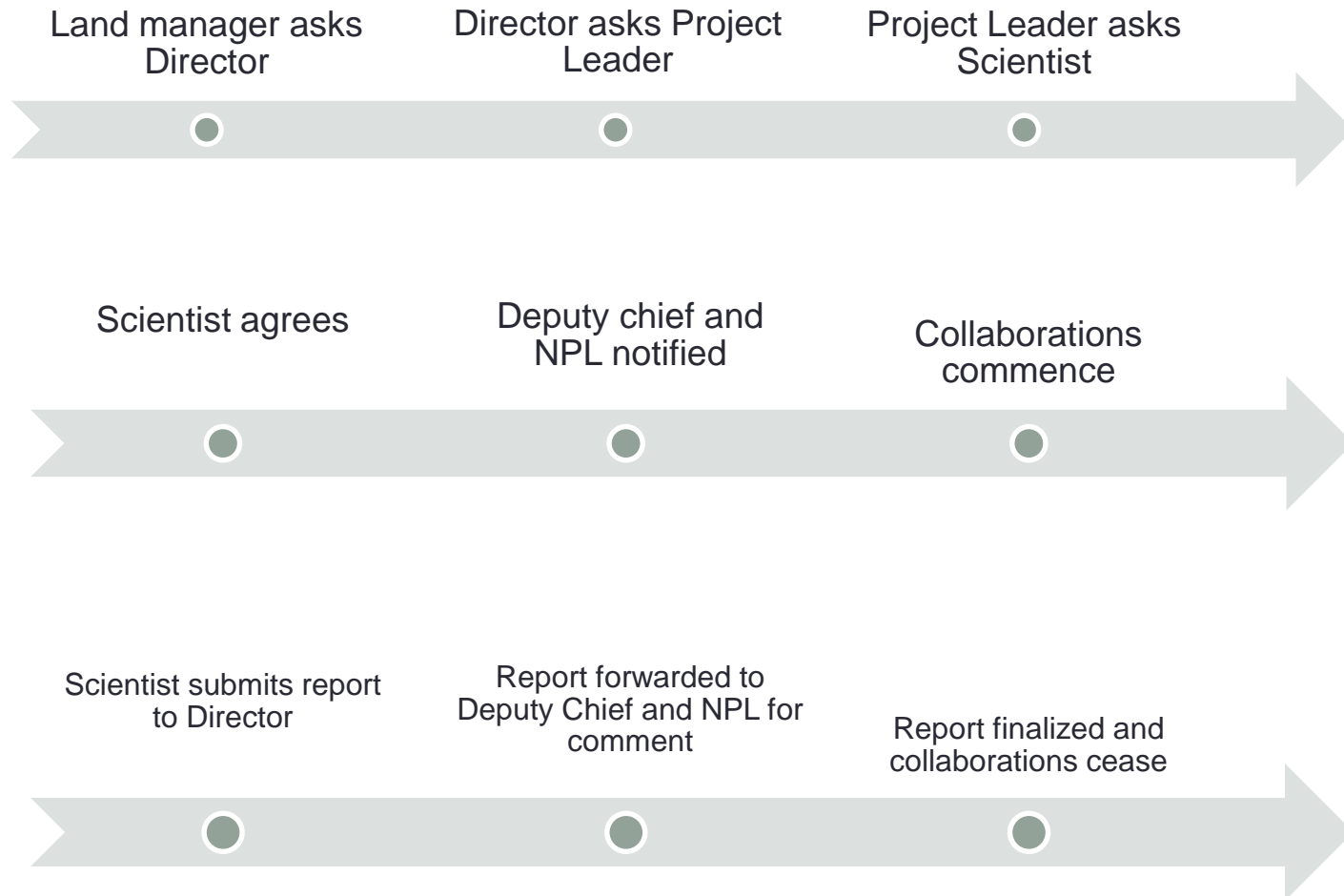
- **Players**
- **Process**
- **Written Communications**
- **Examples**
 - **Suppression expenditure forecasts**
 - **Impact of climate change on wildfire and federal fiscal risk**
- **Summary**

Players and their Roles

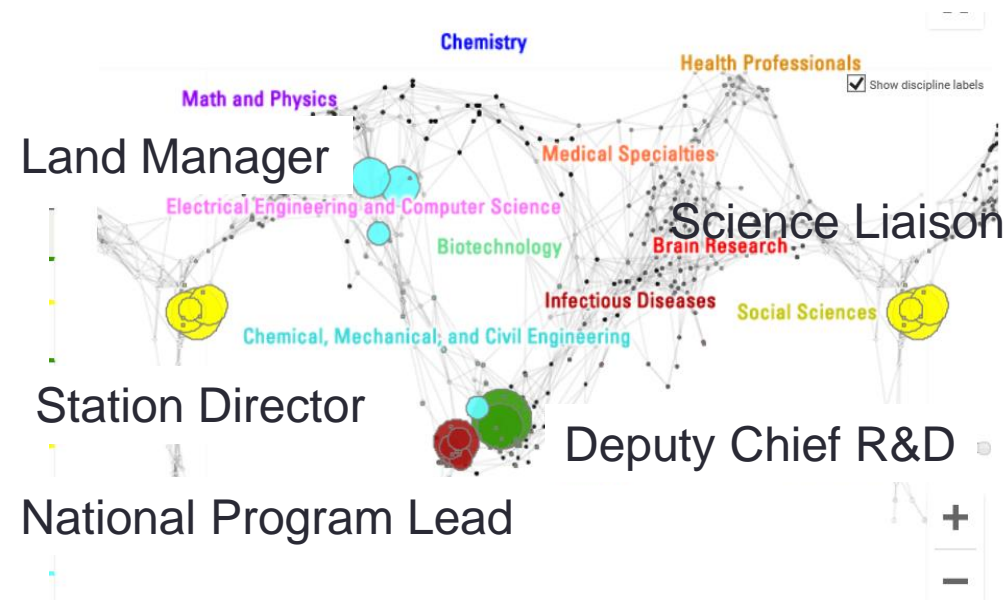


Process

(how your Director wants it to work)



Process (how it really works)



- Friend of a friend, or your brother's exwife
- May become a research project. Or not.
- May lead to you notifying your PL, the NPL, and/or your Stations Director. Or not.
- May lead to a formal report, or an informal report. Or nothing.

Written Communications

(Paraphrased from Benjamin Wittes, Lawfareblog.com)

- "Less is really more"

Unsealed October 11, 2018 by Chief Judge Beryl A. Howell, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, Order No. 11-mc-44 (BAH)

- "The document is powerful because it is so spare;

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

IN RE REPORT AND RECOMMENDA- :
TION OF JUNE 5, 1972 GRAND :
JURY CONCERNING TRANSMISSION :
OF EVIDENCE TO THE HOUSE OF :
REPRESENTATIVES :

Misc. No.

*Filed under seal
March 1, 1974*

- Because it is it *trying to inform, not to persuade*;

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

The June 5, 1972 Grand Jury has heard evidence that has led it to return the indictment being submitted herewith. It has also heard evidence that it regards as having a material bearing on matters that are within the primary jurisdiction of the House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary in its present investigation to determine whether sufficient grounds exist for the House of Representatives to exercise its constitutional power to impeach Richard M. Nixon, President of the United States. It is the belief of the Grand Jury that it should presently defer to the House of Representatives and allow the House to determine what action may be warranted at this time by this

- Because it utterly lacks rhetorical excess."

Written Communications—What is the Scientist's Job?

(Paraphrased from Benjamin Wittes, Lawfareblog.com)

- The Road Map is extremely careful not to do—or seem to do—[the policy maker's] job
- Does not instruct [policy makers on] what [they] should do
- Or [how they] should read complex patterns of evidence
- Simply gave [them] information to use as they saw fit
- And assiduously avoided instruction or didactic messaging as to how to put that information to use.

Written Communications—What is the Scientist's Job?

(Paraphrased from Benjamin Wittes, Lawfareblog.com)

- Prepared by officers who asked
 - What is my role, and what does my role not include?
 - How does my role interact with that of other actors?
 - What duty do I have to facilitate the role of other actors?
 - And how can I fulfill that duty without interfering in their roles?

Examples

- Suppression Expenditure Forecasting
- Impact of Climate Change on Federal Suppression Expenditures

Suppression Expenditure Forecasts

• Players

- Scientists at RMRS and SRS.
- Science liaison—Mark Lichtenstein
- Policy Makers/Managers—FAM and DOI

• Process

- Contact through a colleague at RMRS from FAM. Informal at first.
- Later FLAME Act and USFS Budget Justifications

Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act Suppression Expenditures for Interior and Agriculture Agencies:

September 2018 Forecasts for Fiscal Year 2019

Supporting Documentation

Report Date: August 10, 2018

Executive Summary

USDA Forest Service September FLAME forecast:

Median forecast for FY 2019 in \$2019 dollars	\$2.169 billion
90% confidence range of forecast	\$1.594 billion to \$2.744 billion
Forecast <u>tercile</u> of historical expenditures since 1985	Upper

The Department of the Interior September FLAME forecast:

Median forecast for FY 2019 in \$2019 dollars	\$391 million
90% confidence range of forecast	\$271 million to \$511 million
Forecast <u>tercile</u> of historical expenditures since 1985	Upper

Suppression Expenditure Forecasts

- First, just a number.
Then a short report
- Next, FLAME Act meant we submitted to Congress. Led to a 5-10 page technical report in a chief-approved format
- Finally, FAM scaled back the Congressional submission to a single page
- Still submit a technical report with citations to FAM and OWF

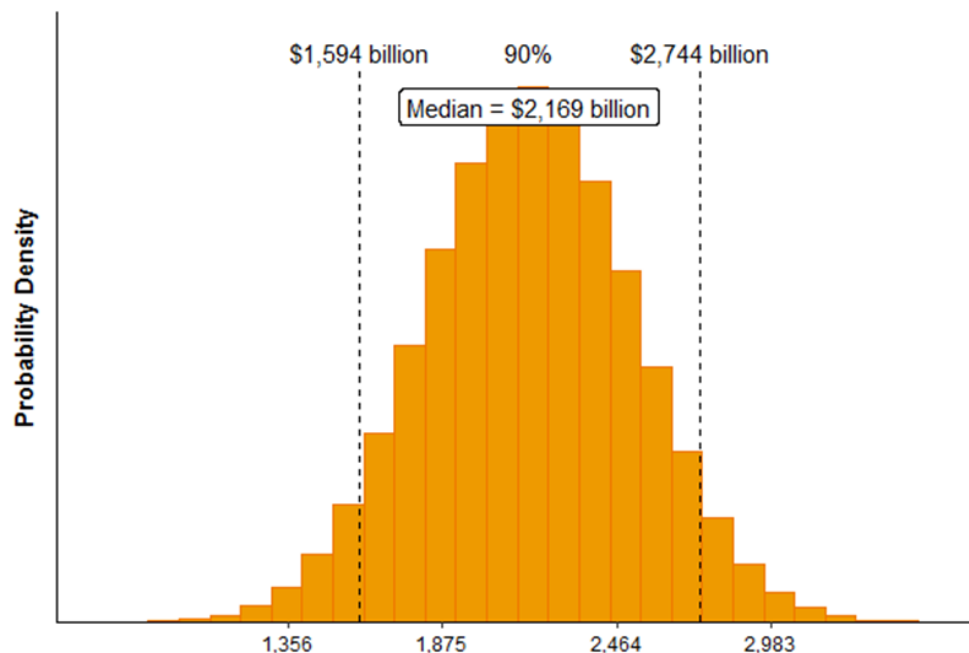
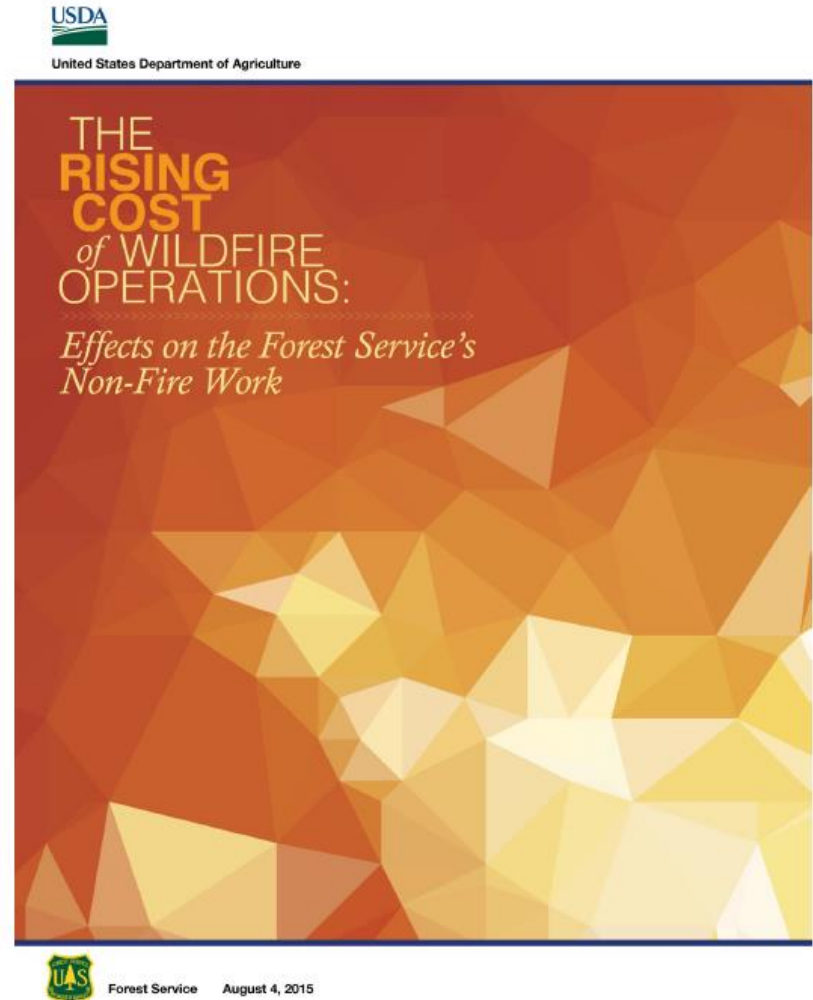


Figure 1. USDA Forest Service: Suppression expenditure forecast probability density for FY 2019 in millions of FY 2019 dollars using the September FLAME Act Forecast Model for FY 2019 (excludes cost pools and base 8 expenditures).

Suppression Expenditure Forecasts

- Liaison carefully kept us out of the policy making, which led to some surprises
 - FLAME Act
 - Policy Document
- Success
 - Contributed to understanding of probability (High 90)
 - Led to use of science and citations in USFS President's budget



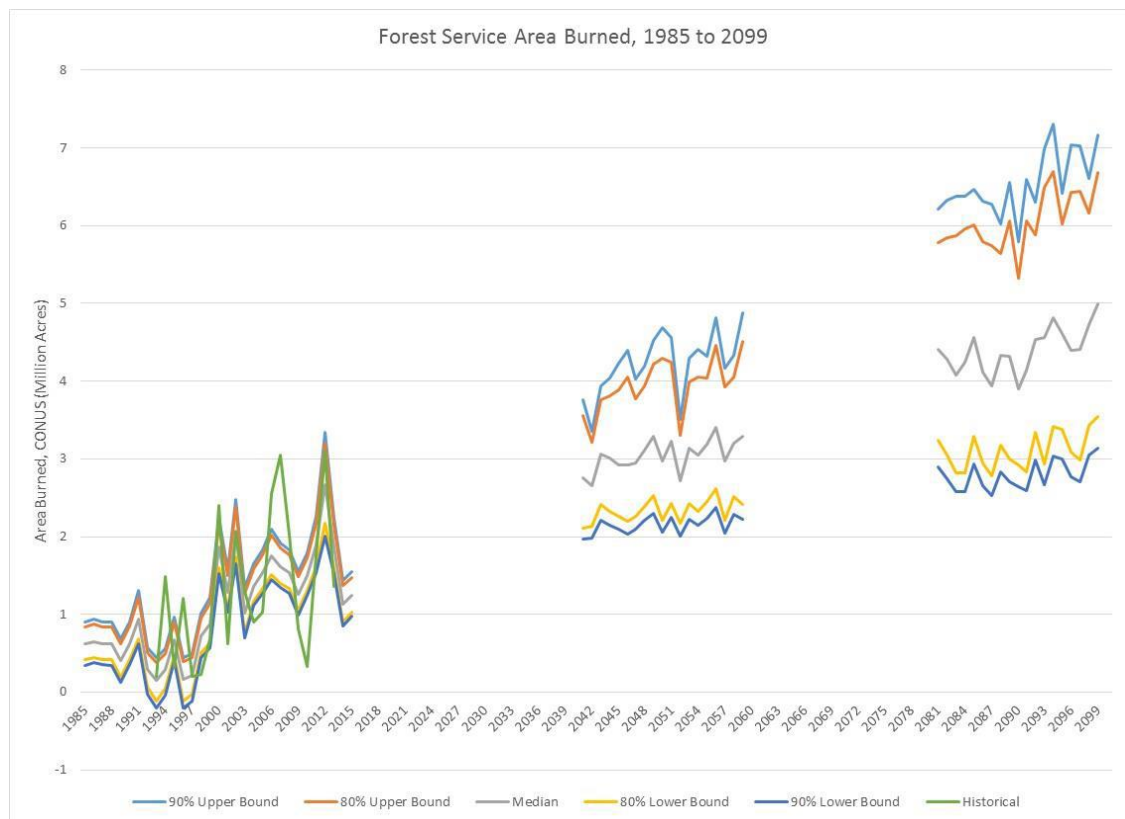
Impact of Climate Change on Wildland Fire and Federal Fiscal Risk

• Players

- Scientists from RMRS and SRS
- Liaison--EPAs OMB Examiner
- Policy Maker—Council of Economic Advisors, White House

• Process

- Direct contact via EPAs OMB Examiner
- Set up team with scientists, representatives of FAM, FS Budget, DOI OWF
- SD and DC notified
- Conducted analysis and prepared a “Technical Supplement”



Impact of Climate Change on Wildland Fire and Federal Fiscal Risk

- Written Communications
 - Scientists prepared a “Technical Supplement”
 - Some back and forth on language
 - OMB/CEA prepared the final document from the Executive Office of the President
 - We read the final document for technical correctness before publication

CLIMATE CHANGE: THE FISCAL RISKS FACING THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

A Preliminary Assessment

November 2016



CLIMATE CHANGE & FISCAL RISK: WILDLAND FIRE TECHNICAL SUPPLEMENT

Executive Summary

Research and Development, USDA Forest Service

Summary

- Requires interest from the policy maker, land manager or advocate
- No fixed process—be sure to notify your SD and NPL
- Find a ‘science liaison’
- Use intelligent but not proprietary language
 - Avoid “rhetorical excess” and “instruction and didactic messaging”
 - Stay in your lane
- Provide a cascade of information
 - Research brief (1-2 pages)
 - More detailed summary (5-10 pages)
 - Technical appendix and/or copies of literature cited